

History and Philosophy of Buddhism

Based mainly on Pali
Canonical and Exegetical
Literature

To
Late Raj Bahadur Lalit Singh
of Ramnigra Estate



Associated Book Agency
Patna, India

FOREWORD

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It gives me genuine pleasure to write this foreword to the work of Prof. Sheo Kumar Singh M.A., D. LITT. This work is mainly based upon his doctorate thesis and is named *History and Philosophy of Buddhism*. In more than one respects it is a unique work. It gives a historical sketch of the origin and growth of Buddhism during the life-time of Gautam Buddha, the promulgator of the creed and the expansion of Buddhism in the different countries of Asia in later times. It gives a full scale vivid picture of the ethics and philosophy of Buddhism. The treatment of the momentous doctrine of Nirvāna is an illuminating contribution based upon the Pali-Tripitaka and Buddha Ghoṣa's Visuddhi-Magga. The chapter on the decline and disappearance of Buddhism from its native land is bound to be considered as an original dissertation. It is an intriguing problem which has exercised the minds of all lovers of Buddhism. Dr. Singh proves with convincing arguments the destruction of monasteries by Turks whose ancestors were Buddhists by faith and later on embraced Islam is the proximate cause of the obliteration of Buddhism from India. It is the sad tale which is only a repetition of the process which uprooted Buddhism from the Afghanistan and Central Asia and also Java. Later documents have almost clinched the issue.

I am confident that this single book will acquaint the readers with the salient points and land-marks of the expansion and decline of this international religion. It was a first missionary religion and Christianity imitated its important institutions. Islam thrived at the cost of Buddhism which they called *Butaparasti* i.e. Buddha-latry.

I have no doubt that his work will find a place in the libraries of the universities of the West and the East and also professors of Buddhology. It deserves to be made a text book for the higher cadres of Buddhist studies. I thank the publisher for the moral courage in undertaking this momentous publication.

Ratna, Dakshinam
Birbhum
19-11-77

SATKARI MOOKERJEE

PREFACE

The title of this book is broadly suggestive of the subject treated in it. My purpose is to present a comprehensive account of Buddhism as a new religion and philosophy together with the historical background. I have indicated in the introduction the influence of the environment and tradition of the country upon the life of the founder of a new religion. The Buddha succeeded in bringing about a veritable revolution in the country which, however, was quite peaceful and bloodless. The Buddha was an intellectual giant and a great debator and this marks him out from Christ and Mohammed. Christ was brought up in the tradition of his country and his religion was only a reformed Judaism. The Arabian tradition and even ritualism were totally accepted by Mohammed. The innovation introduced by him consisted in the eradication of idolatry and replacement of polytheism by monotheism. These two Semitic creeds, Christianity and Islam, are characterised by blind faith and there is very little scope for logical justification, which may be said to come as an afterthought. I have shown in the course of my research that high philosophy and lofty ethics could not save Buddhism from the onslaughts of Islam and Christianity. Buddhism was noted for its advocacy of non-violence. This was its strength and weakness too. It has enlisted the sympathy and support of the elite, but has been rather too abstruse for the masses. Further, it was pre-eminently a religion of the monks. It did little to reform the society of the time. With the destruction of the Buddhist monasteries by the Muslims it simply withered away and the masses easily transferred their allegiance to the religion of the conqueror. The present work unfolds this sad tale and suggests measures that might protect this religion from decay and decline.

I shall feel amply recompensed if this humble work of mine, which cost me years of labour, receives sympathetic consideration and attention. I offer my grateful thanks to scholars who encouraged me and gave helpful suggestions also. My debt to my predecessors is much too immense to permit

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a detailed acknowledgement. It rather increases for their generosity in making it possible for me to criticize them when I differed.

The credit of this book, if there is anything good, goes to Dr. S. Mookerjee who has been my Guru and guide in course of preparing my thesis for the D. Litt. degree which was later on transformed into this book. So far its shortcomings are concerned, they are all mine. Dr. Kali Das Bhattacharya, the then Vice-Chancellor, Vishwa Bharati, Santiniketan and Dr. T.R.V. Murty, Professor of Comparative Religion and Philosophy, McMaster University, Canada have been examiners of that thesis and it is after their valuable suggestions that the thesis took the shape of this book.

Dr. N. Tatia, Director, Jain Vishwa Bharati, Ladnun, Dist. Nagaur (Rajasthan) and Dr. B.P. Sinha, Professor and Head of the Deptt. of Ancient Indian History and Culture, Patna University have also obliged me with their valuable suggestions at different places. Dr. C.S. Upasak, Director, Nava Nalanda Mahavihar and Dr. D.K. Banerjee of the same Mahavihara have obliged me with their valuable suggestions regarding historical portions of the book. So also has Dr. M. Tiwary Professor and Head of the Deptt. of Buddhist Studies, Delhi University obliged me with his suggestions in very many ways. I must thank Professors R. P.D., M.P. Singh, I.D. Singh and M. Chaudhary Dept. of English, Nalanda College for taking pains to check the language in the manuscript. I owe much to Dr. P. Dayal the former Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Parmanand Singh, Development Officer and Sri. S. Lal, F.O., all authorities of Magadh University with whose cooperation the publication of the work could be possible. Last but not the least I must express my sense of thankfulness to Sri Biplav Kumar Sinha due to whose untiring efforts the book could be published in time.

I am obliged to mention that my wife Smt. A.M. Rani and my eldest son Vinay and daughter Asha who, apart from bearing patiently all odds in course of writing this assignment, have been immensely helpful in preparing index of the book.

I now conclude with the often quoted verse of Kālidāsa :
*"Aparitoṣād viduṣām na sādhu manye prayoga-vijñānam
 Balavadapi śikṣitānam āmanyapratyayam cetah."*

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<i>SK</i>	: Sāṅkhya Kārikā
<i>ThG</i>	: Therī Gāthā
<i>ThraG</i>	: Thera Gāthā
<i>VM</i>	: Visuddhi Magga (Kośāmbi edition)
<i>VV</i>	: Vimāna Vatthu
<i>YD</i>	: Yuktidīpikā
<i>YBh</i>	: Yoga Bhāṣya

All Pali references are to the Nalanda Devanagari Editions, except in those cases where editions are noted in brackets.

Transliteration

अ—a, आ—ā, इ—i, ई—ī, उ—u, ऊ—ū, ए—e, ऐ—ai, ओ—o, औ—au, अं—an or am, अः—ah, क—k, ख—kh, ग—G, घ—gh, ङ—ṅ, च—c, छ—ch, ज—j, झ—jh, ञ—ñ, ट—t, ठ—th, ड—d, ढ—dh, ण—ṇ, त—t, थ—th, द—d, ध—dh, न—n, प—p, फ—ph, ब—b, भ—bh, म—m, य—y, र—r, ल—l, व—v, श—ś, ष—ṣ, स—s, ह—h, र्ह—rh, ल्ह—lh, क्ष—ks, त्र—tr, ज्ञ—jn, ञ—ṇ.

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plausible case. A researcher is an enquirer of truth and if his finding, though buttressed by unequivocal statements and logic, does not commend itself to an orthodox believer in Buddhism, he will plead *cadit quaestio*.

We have examined the nature and content of *Nirvāna* by a scrutiny of the texts of the Pali canon and also the *Milinda Pañho* which enjoys co-equal authority with canonical literature of Theravāda school. The later systems, namely, *Sarvāstivāda*, *Sautrāntika*, *Yogācāra* and *Sūnyavāda* of Nāgārjuna have formulated their theories of *Nirvāna* which differ *toto caelo* from the Theravāda conception as represented by us. The *Sarvāstivāda* calls *Nirvāna* '*Pratisankhyā Nirodha*', which is an infallible state. But it is not clear whether it is an inanimate or conscious existence. The orthodox *Sautrāntika* literature is conspicuous by its absence and we must be contented with the version left by the school of Vasubandhu, Dinnāga and Dharmakīrti. There are some stray references in the Brahmanical works such as the *Nyāya Kandali* that *Nirvāna* is extinction of being and consciousness. In the representation of the school of Dinnāga *Nirvāna* is said to be a momentary consciousness, pure and undefiled which goes on producing its analogue *ad infinitum*. In fact the concept of *Nirvāna* is bound up with the free state of the individual. If the individual consists of momentary states of consciousness, *Nirvāna* will be nothing but the pure self qua momentary consciousness bereft of all impurities (*Taṇhā*). In our examination of the theory of causation of the fluxist we have found that Dharmakīrti's faith in momentariness deduced from causal efficiency as the test of reality, is rather a concession to the dogmas of the school. If causality be a subjective necessity of thought, as Kant has made it out to be, the doctrine of momentariness must tumble down like a house of cards.

In Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikā* the representation of *Dharmakāya*, which is the ultimate goal of the *Arhata*, is one which is indistinguishable from the conception of *Nirvāna* as propounded by Buddhaghosa in the *Viśuddhi Magga* and also from the Upaniṣadic conception. It is transcendental consciousness bereft of subject-object consciousness. There is no knower in it, nor

perception of an object. It is pure, eternal, blissful emancipation. It is called *Dharmakāya*, because it pervades all that is.¹ Unfortunately this conception of *Nirvāna* was ignored by the exponents of Dinnāga's School.

About Nāgārjuna's conception of *Nirvāna* we are left in a dilemma whether it is pure being or pure not-being. From the text of the *Mūla Mādhyamika Kārikā* and Candrakīrti's commentary on it, we do not derive any light regarding its positivistic character. Later scholars have endeavoured to deny its negative character. This will remain a moot question.

It must be acknowledged that the Pali canon in spite of the suspected tampering of the Ceylonese monks preserves a consistent unified and ancient tradition. Doubts have been cast upon the undiluted purity of the texts by Mrs. Rhys Davids and others. It has been shown by Dr. Pāṇṇatissa in his doctorate thesis that Vasubandhu believes that *Nirvāna* is the only reality and the phenomenal world is an appearance. We are inclined to accept this interpretation as faithful representation of Buddhaghosa's position and that of Theravāda for the matter of that.

After discussing the different aspects of *Nibbāna*, which is ultimate goal of human life, we would like to consider how Buddhism penetrated into the whole of India and spread abroad before attaining *Nibbāna* i.e., disappearance from its native land.

1. Achitto anupalambhoasau jñānaṃ lokottaraṃ ca tat
 Āsyasya parāvṛttir dvidhā daughūlyahānitaḥ
 Sa evānāśravo dhāturacintyaḥ kuśalo dhruvaḥ
 Sukho vimuktikāyoasau dharmākhyoayam mahāmuneḥ
 —Verses-29, 30. *Triṃśikā Vijāptibhāṣyam* (edited by Dr. M. Tiwari).

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There were restrictions as to inter-marriage and eating together. Marriage depended upon the *Gotra* or lineage among Aryans and among other people either on the tribe or on the village. There is no instance of marriage among two parties of the same native village.⁴ The elements, the foundations of the caste system were there; but the system itself did not yet develop. What we know of the period, 800-600 B.C., with which we are concerned, is most due to the Brahmanic literature. The Brahmanic view, which is mostly accepted is that the Brahmins were then socially the highest class and the repository of religion and culture. The Buddha did not acknowledge the primacy and supremacy of the Brahmins. The Kṣatriya caste was the best and supreme in his view.⁵ This unenviable estimation of the Brahmin caste who held a pre-eminent

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position from the Vedic times and were held in highest esteem, need not be a personal idiosyncrasy of the Buddha. Most probably the position of the Brahmins in the Śākya territory was not beyond challenge. The influence of the Vedic culture must have been faint and infirm, if not non-existent. Oldenberg has shown that the Aryan culture of the orthodox Vedic tradition did not hold its sway in the eastern regions beyond the river Sadānirā. He deduces this conclusion from the account of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.¹ The Buddha was conscious of his pedigree and prided himself on being a Kṣatriya of the Śākyan tribe which was according to him the purest of the Kṣatriya clan. The Śākyas were so proud of their *Gotra*, i.e., group of agnate that they did not consent to marry their own daughter to Prasenajita, the king of Kosala and as such they were punished by Prasenajita's son.² Their system of marriage was not governed by Vedic rules.

If we are to believe in the tradition of the Śākya people, incest of the first degree was prevalent in the earliest days among the Śākyas. The brother married the full-blooded sister in order to preserve the sanctity of the blue blood. The Buddha, however, traced his genealogy to Ikṣvāku,³ a powerful king of the solar dynasty and eponymous founder of the kings of Ayodhya. The genealogical account need not be scouted as a spurious pretension. It is sure that the Buddha was an Aryan and claimed to be so. But the race developed outlandish customs and practices which were not at all approved by Vedic orthodox community. Secondly, there is no unchallengeable evidence that he had a schooling in the Vedic tradition. Sacrificial

1. Oldenberg, *Buddha, His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*, pp. 398-99.
2. The matrimonial alliance of Prasenajita with the Śākyas had a tragic character. The Śākyas were so proud of their racial status that they gave the daughter of a slave to Prasenajita in marriage. Vidurdarbha, the son of the pair became the king of Kosala after his father's death and came to learn of the fraud perpetrated by the Śākyas. He took terrible revenge and is said to have exterminated the whole Śākyan clan by way of retaliation.
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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AN</i>	: Aṅguttara Nikāya
<i>BC</i>	: Buddha Carita
<i>CP</i>	: Cariyā Piṭaka
<i>CV</i>	: Culla Vagga
<i>DhPA</i>	: Dhamma Pada Aṭṭhakathā
<i>DN</i>	: Dīgha Nikāya
<i>Dvyav</i>	: Divyāvadāna
<i>HC</i>	: Harṣa Carita
<i>IV</i>	: Itivuttaka
<i>JA</i>	: Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā (Dharmārākṣita Edition)
<i>JC</i>	: Jina Carita
<i>KhN</i>	: Khuddaka Nikāya
<i>KV</i>	: Kathā Vatthu
<i>KDM</i>	: Kādambarī
<i>KA</i>	: Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra
<i>LV</i>	: Lalita Vistara
<i>MN</i>	: Majjhima Nikāya
<i>MNA</i>	: Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā
<i>MV</i>	: Mahā Vagga
<i>MPS</i>	: Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta
<i>MVas</i>	: Mahā Vastu
<i>MAMilp</i>	: Milinda Pañho
<i>MK</i>	: Mādhyamika Kārikā
<i>NK</i>	: Nidāna Kathā

<i>NKC</i>	: Nyāyakumudacandra
<i>PV</i>	: Peta Vatthu
<i>SamN</i>	: Saṃyutta Nikāya
<i>SN</i>	: Sutta Nipāta
<i>SK</i>	: Sāṅkhya Kārikā
<i>ThG</i>	: Therī Gāthā
<i>ThraG</i>	: Thera Gāthā
<i>VM</i>	: Visuddhi Magga (Kośāmbi edition)
<i>VV</i>	: Vimāna Vatthu
<i>YD</i>	: Yuktidīpikā
<i>YBh</i>	: Yoga Bhāṣya

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अ—a, आ—ā, इ—i, ई—ī, उ—u, ऊ—ū, ए—e, ऐ—ai, ओ—o, औ—au, अं—an or am, अः—ah, क—k, ख—kh, ग—G, घ—gh, ङ—ṅ, च—c, छ—ch, ज—j, झ—jh, ञ—ñ, ट—t, ठ—th, ड—d, ढ—dh, ण—ṇ, त—t, थ—th, द—d, ध—dh, न—n, प—p, फ—ph, ब—b, भ—bh, म—m, य—y, र—r, ल—l, व—v, श—ś, ष—ṣ, स—s, ह—h, र्ह—rh, ल्ह—lh, क्ष—ks, त्र—tr, ज्ञ—jn, ञ—ṇ.

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